



9 August 2005

AWGA and PETA Reach Groundbreaking Agreement

A historic document that, if ratified by wool growers throughout Australia, will establish a time frame for ending mulesing and require that sheep live export standards comply with Australian welfare standards governing the care of domestic animals, has been signed today by Australian Wool Growers Association (AWGA) president Chick Olsson and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) president Ingrid Newkirk. The plan provides a road map for an audited phase-out of mulesing that would start immediately and end before 2010, and establishes a new wool brand which would be available to retailers internationally.

Talks between PETA and the AWGA began in New York in June with an in-person meeting between negotiators for the groups and have resulted in what PETA's chief negotiator, Dr. Steven Gross, describes as: "A triumph for sheep and those who care about them, both from a commercial and a welfare point of view." Both sides agree that it is critical that the entire wool industry is given a chance to join in these productive negotiations. Chick Olsson says, "I believe the talks have produced a sound plan that allows some confidence to be introduced back into the depressed Australian wool market, that recognises that mulesing is being phased out now and the need for live export shipping standards to meet the best Australian welfare conditions, is a win for all concerned, especially the sheep."

Both sides have had to stand back from what they would consider a "perfect outcome" in order to allow the industry and the welfare of sheep to "move forward." The agreement would mean PETA's campaign is suspended for 45 days starting today and another 45 days if the AWI and others who have so far refused to talk to the group decide to consider the plan. If ratified by all, PETA has agreed that it would not campaign against Australian wool for ten years from the date the agreement is ratified by industry. For its part, the AWGA would support the involvement of Australian animal welfare groups into discussions on the issues at hand, guarantee that mulesing ends by the start of 2010, ensure that registered post-mulesing pain relief is applied, push forward the research and use of pre-mulesing analgesia, and end live export of sheep to those markets that don't meet Australian welfare standards. Third parties would audit the progress of the plan.

"AWGA has proved that, as we've said all along, that sheep farmers don't have to spend millions of dollars on lawsuits and costly adverts to stop the war against wool", says Olsson. "Wool growers and PETA have found enough common ground to reach an end to this damaging boycott."

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